United Nations A/AC.271/1

General Assembly

Distr.: General
8 June 2005

Original: English

Regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects
Second International Workshop
New York, 13-15 June 2005

Note verbale dated 8 June 2005 from the Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to transmit herewith a statement by the Government of Iceland regarding the regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could have the present note verbale and its annex circulated as a document of the Second International Workshop on the regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, to be held in New York from 13 to 15 June 2005.

05-37745 (E) 090605

Annex to the note verbale dated 8 June 2005 from the Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Iceland will not be participating in the Second International Workshop on the Global Marine Assessment (GMA), to be held in New York from 13 to 15 June 2005, for the reasons explained below.

Iceland has over the years actively encouraged more concerted action on marine pollution, an issue of growing international concern. Pollution respects no boundaries and cannot be tackled successfully in the absence of coordinated global action. It has long been recognized that pollution from land-based sources is one of the most serious and extensive threats to the health of the marine ecosystem, but actions to diminish these threats at the national, regional and global levels have been lacking.

The Icelandic Government welcomed the decision in General Assembly resolution 57/141 to establish a regular process under the United Nations for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects, as it acknowledged that international action was needed to prevent and counter marine pollution and physical degradation of the marine environment. Such an assessment was seen as an opportunity to provide our policymakers with accessible and authoritative information and advice as a basis for responsible decision-making.

Since the adoption of resolution 57/141, there has been a concerted effort to widen the scope of GMA from its main objective, namely, to combat marine pollution and prevent the physical degradation of the marine environment, to include living marine resources.

This raises a fundamental concern for Iceland, particularly since the wider approach suggested implies mixing together scientific and management issues. Throughout this process, Iceland and many other nations have maintained that the assessment should be policy-relevant, but not policy-prescriptive. Iceland is concerned that once resources enter into the assessment, there will be additional pressure to influence fisheries management.

Iceland has participated actively in the preparatory work of GMA. Unfortunately, Iceland's ideas about GMA, including, in particular, as regards its scope, and those of States that have ambitions for GMA well beyond what Iceland considers appropriate, have so far not been reconcilable.

Under those circumstances, Iceland reserves its position as to its possible future participation in the further consideration of issues relating to the establishment of the regular process.